

UPDATE

OF THE TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Volume 6 • Number 4

July/August 2000

DMHDD
Commissioner
Elisabeth Rukeyser
(left) accepts the final
report from co-chairs
of the Criminal Justice
Task Force, Davidson
County Sheriff Gayle
Ray and George
Haley, past president
of the Mental Health
Planning Council.



DMHDD Receives CJ Task Force Report

In June, the 25-member Criminal Justice Task Force submitted its report on the needs of criminal justice offenders with mental illness to DMHDD Commissioner Elisabeth Rukeyser.

The group, which includes professional and lay representatives of the mental health and law enforcement fields, was appointed in March of 1999 by Rukeyser and charged with examining issues and considering a course of action for Tennesseans with mental illness who are involved in the criminal justice system.

The Task Force was co-chaired by Davidson County Sheriff Gayle Ray and George Haley, past president of the Mental Health Planning Council.

Areas examined included interagency coordinating and training, best practice guidelines, and Title 33 of the *Tennessee Code Annotated* — laws governing the provision of services to persons with mental illness, mental retardation and/or substance abuse.

The report includes recommendations that address mental health, criminal justice, training and systems change.

The Task Force also identified components, which may be developed and implemented to meet the needs of local communities. The components included *Facilitation*, *Education and Training*, and *Community Support*.

Facilitation is the process of developing and maintaining relationships between the

criminal justice and mental health services systems to ensure they work together to achieve common goals. This process can be accomplished through a designated facilitator, sometimes referred to as a "boundary spanner."

Education and Training are the necessary building blocks to develop working relationships. Education provides the foundation from which communication and understanding are built; training activities must be relevant and ongoing.

Community Support is the willingness of communities to accept responsibility and work collaboratively to improve the functioning of the criminal justice and mental health services delivery systems on behalf of individuals with mental illness who interact with the Tennessee criminal justice system.

The Task Force is a cooperative effort of the DMHDD, the Tennessee Mental Health Planning Council and the Davidson County Sheriff's Office.

Department Name Changes

Governor Signs Title 33 Legislation

On June 23, Governor Don Sundquist signed House Bill 3004/Senate Bill 3076, Title 33 legislation into law.

The legislation includes a comprehensive set of recommendations for revision of the laws that govern the delivery of services to Tennesseans with mental illness, mental retardation and/or substance abuse.

The proposed legislation was submitted to the governor in January. These recommendations were the result of a year-long study by a 26-member commission, appointed by the governor and charged with reviewing Title 33 of the *Tennessee Code Annotated*.

The next issue of UPDATE will feature the major revisions to Title 33 along with timelines for implementation.

Effective with the signing by the governor, the name of the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation officially changed to the Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities (DMHDD).

The Department of Mental Health (its first official name) was created on March 13, 1953, when Governor Frank G. Clement signed House Bill 242 of the 78th General Assembly.

Emphasis on mental health remained the major focus of the name until May of 1975 when Governor Ray Blanton signed House Bill 636 thus changing the name to Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation.

Statewide Crisis Line 1 (800) 809-9957

This line operates 24 hours a day 7 days a week and is open to anyone who needs mental health crisis services. The call is routed to the closest crisis team. If all teams are busy, the line rolls to a back up line that can either handle the call or contact crisis workers in the caller's area for direct intervention. Someone is always available to answer and locate crisis services. This line is provided by the TennCare Partners Program and funded by Premier and Tennessee Behavioral Health. **See Page 6 for other important telephone numbers.**

Update

of the Tennessee Department of Mental
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State of Tennessee
Don Sundquist, Governor



Elisabeth Rukeyser,
Commissioner
Ben Dishman, Deputy Commissioner
Melanie Hampton, Asst. Commissioner
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Barbara Brent, Deputy Commissioner
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programs, services or activities.

Contact the department's EEO/AA Coordinator
at (615) 532-6580, the Title VI Coordinator at
(615) 532-6700 or the ADA Coordinator at
(615) 532-6700 for inquiries, complaints or
further information. Persons with hearing
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Around the State

Youth Violence Prevention Conference Set For November 2

Developing youth violence prevention
strategies is the major focus of *Tools for Today
and Tomorrow*, a conference scheduled at
Nashville's Regal Maxwell House Hotel,
November 2.

Coordinator Gwen Hamer said the one-
day event will feature tracks on research and
evaluation, faith-based community
involvement, school programs and activities,
grass roots programs and minority-over
representation in secure facilities.

The program begins at 8:30 a.m. Youth
activities are scheduled from 5:00 until 8:00
p.m.

The program is targeted to professionals
who work with today's youth, parents or
consumers of services, faith community
leaders and advocates.

According to Hamer, early registration is
\$60. Special rates are available to groups,
students and consumers. CEUs are \$10.

For additional information, call (615) 532-
6510 or 1-800-670-9882.

Perry Appointed to SAMSHA Advisory Team

Dr. Stephanie
White-Perry, assistant
commissioner for the
Department of
Health's Bureau of
Alcohol & Drug
Abuse Services, has
been appointed to the
advisory team of the
Substance Abuse and
Mental Health Services Administration's
Center for Mental Health Services. She
joins a group of professionals who advise the
center on mental health related issues.



IRS Allows Medical Deductions to Parents

In May the IRS issued a ruling that allows
parents to deduct some of the costs
associated with attending medical
conferences relating to their child's health
condition.

The ruling means that parents may deduct
"amounts paid to attend a medical
conference relating to the chronic disease of
the individual's dependent." Amounts
covered include expenses of admission and
transportation.

Professionals and advocacy groups focusing
on particular diseases or physical conditions
frequently hold national meetings at which
parents can learn about new and innovative
treatment and management strategies.

Cooperative Grant Funds Centerstone/Vanderbilt Youth Violence Prevention

Centerstone Community Mental Health
Centers and Vanderbilt University
researchers recently joined forces to teach
preschool children, their parents and
teachers techniques targeted to stopping
violent behavior before it starts.

A pilot, the Behavioral Enrichment and
Social Training Program, was recently started
at Nashville's Caldwell Early Childhood
Center. It targets 4 and 5 year-olds.

With key support from the state, metro
schools and the private sector, 15 additional
programs are expected to begin in Davidson
County schools during the coming year.

The program is funded with more than
\$135,000 from the DMHDD, the state Office
of Criminal Justice, The Memorial
Foundation and the Kroger Foundation.

John Page, vice president of children and
youth services at Centerstone, said the two-
year program is divided into four, four month
segments in selected schools.

"Based on the success of the pilot, we will
recommend that the DMHDD expand it to
other counties," he said.

Depression Screenings Scheduled in October

On Thursday, October 5, the DMHDD's
Division of Mental Health Services will offer
free depression screenings to the general
public.

The screenings, held annually on National
Screening Day, will take place in Conference
Room C, 2nd Floor of the Cordell Hull
Building, 425 5th Avenue, North in
Nashville. Times will be announced later.

Nashville Psychiatrist Honored by NAMI

Elizabeth Baxter, M.D., a Nashville
consumer psychiatrist who is actively
involved in providing assertive community
treatment programs to persons with severe
mental illnesses was among 52 psychiatrists
honored with the Exemplary Psychiatrist
Award of the National Alliance for the
Mentally Ill.

The presentation took place at the
American Psychiatric Association's annual
meeting in Chicago.

NAMI presented the awards to recognize
physicians for making substantial
contributions in clinical care, public
education or advocacy.

Around the State

MMHI Nurse, DMHDD Employee of the Year

Carolyn Adams, a Memphis Mental Health Institute (MMHI) nurse, who has long demonstrated dedication to patients and excellent supervisory skills, has been named the DMHDD Employee of the Year for 2000.

A former nurse manager for the MMHI Sequoyah Center for Children and Adolescents, Adams now serves as program services nursing supervisor.

She joined MMHI as a head nurse in 1965, but left in 1967 for a term with the Mississippi County Office of Economic Development. She rejoined MMHI (children and adolescent program) in 1970 and has held her present position as nursing supervisor since 1980.

Adams completed her pre-nursing training at the University of Memphis. Her diploma in nursing was earned at the Baptist School of Nursing in Memphis.

She was selected for the honor from a group of employees representing Tennessee's mental health institutes, developmental centers and the central office.



Ridgeview Chief Executive Officer Bob Benning (left) joins staff, residents and Chamber of Commerce executives in special ribbon cutting ceremonies for the apartments at 170 Lloyd Street in Oneida.

Ridgeview Opens Apartments in Oneida

Ridgeview in Oneida opened an eight unit apartment for persons with mental disabilities in May with a ribbon cutting and an open house. The complex features accommodations for an onsite manager to provide 24-hour support.

The apartment is funded through grants from the Office of Housing and Urban Development, SunTrust Bank and the Federal Home Loan Bank of Cincinnati.

For information about the apartments or the services offered by Ridgeview, contact the main center in Oak Ridge at 800 834-4178.



A scene at the Pathways for Understanding Conference (from left)—Sandy Health (director of The Nashville Connection), Presenter Dr. Sheila Peters, Lygia Williams (technical assistance liaison for The Nashville Connection), Barbara Warren-Sams (of Northwest Regional Educational Lab in Portland), and Presenter Sharon Peters.

June Conference Explores Children At-Risk of SED

Families, child services providers and advocates for children and youth recently had opportunities to explore the gender specific needs of girls with serious emotional disturbance (SED).

Pathways for Understanding, held at the Scarritt-Bennett Center in Nashville, focused on the programming needs of girls across a continuum of care.

Presenters included Dr. Sheila Peters, assistant professor of psychology at Fisk University whose specialty is working with vulnerable child and adolescent

populations, and Sharon Peters, program manager and fiscal officer with Green, Peters & Associates.

The two discussed the need for programs that are child focused and address the entire family.

Sponsored by the Department of Mental Health & Developmental Disabilities, the program was funded with a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Office of Juvenile Justice of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Dede Wallace Gets Abstinence Grant

The Dede Wallace Center in Nashville was recently awarded a \$40,000 Department of Health grant to provide lessons about sexual abstinence to an estimated 1,000 adolescents.

The program, *Practicing Abstinence through Communication Training*, targets male and females, ages 10-17, in a classroom setting.

MHAMT Services Joins Senior Links

The aging services programs of the Mental Health Association of Middle Tennessee recently teamed with Senior Links for Mental Health to provide free behavioral and clinical screenings to older adults.

Senior Links is a cooperative effort of the MHA in association with Parthenon Pavilion, the Alzheimer's Association, PSI Solutions, Centerstone Community Mental Health Centers, Psychiatric Consultants and Volunteer Behavioral Health.

Senior Links' purpose is to raise awareness of depression, dementia and other mental health needs of older adults.

Services are available 24-hours each day, seven days a week. Call (615) 342-1456 or the Mental Health Association directly at (615) 269-5355.

Happenings

- Special “Children First” license plates with a slogan and a logo depicting cheerful children are now available. Proceeds are used to fund child abuse prevention programs. Cost is \$25 over registration. Proceeds go to the Child Abuse Prevention grant program of the Department of Children’s Services. Contact the office of your county court clerk to purchase the tags.
- Jon H. Kass, who holds professorships in psychology and cell biology and serves as an investigator for the Kennedy Center of Vanderbilt, was recently elected to the National Academy of Sciences.
- Governor Don Sundquist recently named Debra Davenport of Big Sandy to the Psychology Board of Examiners. A graduate of the University of Tennessee at Memphis and Austin Peay, Davenport has a private practice in counseling and psychological services and is director of the Baptist Behavioral Health Care.
- Terrie Cross, executive director of the Appalachian Life Quality Initiative of Scott County, has been elected to the Board of Directors for Ridgeview Hospital.
- Officials and staff at Perry County Hospital in Linden advise they are celebrating the first anniversary of their partial hospitalization program for older adults. Targeted to members of the geriatric community with mental health needs, the program also features a 14-bed inpatient unit. Fully staffed, the Senior Care Program is available to anyone who has Medicare as a primary provider.
- Mike Matthews, a licensed psychological examiner, has joined Employee Assistance Services in Tullahoma as co-owner. Matthews holds a master’s degree in clinical psychology from MTSU and a bachelor’s degree in special education from Vanderbilt.
- Garrett Mark Jackson, a graduate of Humboldt High School, was recently awarded the 2000 Marcia Polk Scholarship. Jackson was chosen from group of students who plan to major in counseling or education. The Martha Polk Guidance Association is an affiliate of the Tennessee Counseling Association, which includes school and/or mental health professionals from 18 counties in West Tennessee.
- Mark Dye, director of the Harton Regional Medical Center’s psychiatric program, was recently honored with an Employee Recognition Award from Tenet Healthcare. As the award winner, Dye chose the Center for Childhood Development to receive the \$500 donation. Tenet is the parent company of Harton.
- Myra Young Johnson, a licensed clinical social worker, has joined the practice of Dr. Badshah Maitra with Cumberland Psychiatric Services in McMinnville. Johnson, formerly of Celina, has provided Middle Tennesseans with psychotherapy services for many years.
- Dr. Tom Biller of Cleveland, a practicing psychologist, was recently conferred as a board certified Diplomate-Fellow Prescribing Psychologist. The International College of Prescribing Psychologist and the Prescribing Psychologists’ Register gave the designation.
- Dr. Charles R. Freed has been named vice president of medical services for Magellan Behavioral Health of Tennessee. Freed is a board-certified addictionologist, a child and adolescent psychiatrist and a trained child and adult psychoanalyst. Magellan in Chattanooga serves more than 1.1 million in Tennessee and adjoining states.
- Cheryl Green, MSSW, was recently named program director for Woodbury’s Stones River Hospital geriatric psychiatry services division. She manages the Riverside Center and Riverside Crossings, both inpatient and outpatient mental health programs for older adults. Green formerly served on the psychiatric service staff at Nashville’s St. Thomas Hospital.
- Effective in May, the Marion County Mental Health Center became the Mountain Valley Mental Health Center. Sheila Taylor, regional director, said the change was part of a reorganization to comply with the state’s reorganization of Medicare and the formation of TennCare Partners. The outpatient program is located at Jasper.
- Training sessions for operators and staff of mental health supportive living and mental retardation boarding home facilities were held on May 23-24. Sponsored by the Regional Licensure Office for East Tennessee, sessions took place at the McNabb Center in Knoxville and the Aim Center in Chattanooga.
- Charter Lakeside Behavioral Health Systems of Memphis is being bought by Universal Health Systems, Inc., the country’s third-largest hospital chain. Universal, based in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, operates 70 hospitals in 20 states.

Important Phone Numbers

TennCare Information Line 1 (800) 669-1851

(Customer service for the TennCare Bureau—handles general TennCare information, premiums and eligibility questions.) Operated by the TennCare Bureau.

TennCare Advocacy Line 1 (800) 722-7474

Hispanic Advocacy Line 1 (800) 722-7474

The Bureau of TennCare contracts with Crisis Services of Nashville to operate this program to assist consumers in obtaining urgently needed medical services and to advocate for children in the Department of Children Services custody.

TennCare Partners Advocacy and Information Line

1 (800) 758-1638

The TennCare Bureau contracts with the Mental Health Association of Middle Tennessee to operate this line to provide information on the Partners Program and provide external advocates to help consumers access services.

DMHDD’s Office of Consumer Affairs 1 (800) 560-5767

Operated by the Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities to assist consumers in addressing issues and finding their way through the system. Will also help exercise their appeal rights if that course of action is needed.

Harrison to Oversee Implementation of TennCare/Partners Agreement

A veteran professional at administering social services programs at the state level will oversee implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding agreed on by TennCare and the DMHDD regarding the TennCare Partners Program.

Commissioner Elisabeth Rukeyser said Sherry Frazier Harrison has been named deputy assistant commissioner for Policy and Oversight.

Harrison will be responsible for ensuring implementation of the agreement that defines the roles of DMHDD and TennCare relative to providing mental health services to Tennesseans who qualify under the Partners Program.

The agreement provides DMHDD with formal responsibility to make policy recommendations to TennCare regarding behavioral services.

It also enables the department to monitor some aspects of the TennCare Partners operations.

TennCare, as the "single state agency responsible for Medicaid," will continue to serve as the primary administrative agency for the Partners Program.

Until her appointment, Harrison served as director of the TennCare Provider Services Division for the Department of Finance & Administration. As such, she was responsible for responding to, researching and resolving



TennCare provider inquiries and issues as well as being responsible for various operational units.

Harrison holds a master's in social work from the University of Tennessee School of Social Work in Nashville. She earned her bachelor's degree with a major in psychology and minor in sociology in 1972 at UT-Knoxville.

Other professional experience includes service as assistant director of policy for the DOH Bureau of Medicaid and the regional director for the DHS Davidson County offices.

Conferences

- The Tennessee Black Health Care Commission reports the 5th Annual Minority Health Summit — *Partners Investing in Healthy Living* — will be held August 24-25 in the Legislative Plaza. Nationally and area known speakers will examine significant areas of economics, education and health important to Tennessee and its minority citizens. For information, call (615) 741-9443.
- The Tennessee Adoption Conference 2000 will be held September 27-29 at Nashville's Renaissance Hotel. The conference will focus on practices in securing permanent adoptive families for children. For information, contact Rita Tripp, University of Tennessee School of Social Work at (615) 340-0759.

TAMHO Forms A&D Section

The Tennessee Association of Mental Health Organizations (TAMHO) recently established an alcohol and drug section as part of its organizational structure.

Dr. Jim Causey, president, said the new section enables better identification of critical issues so they can be assigned to a higher priority. In this way, realistic solutions can be found to problems.

Dr. Randy Jessee, A&D section president said that TAMHO members have long comprised the state's largest group of outpatient providers of substance abuse services. "But we need other components if we are to serve our communities well," he concluded.

NAMI Honors Rukeyser, Thomas, Carobene

In June, the Nashville Chapter of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill awarded Commissioner Elisabeth Rukeyser its Professional Advocate Award. MTMHI Superintendent Joe Carobene received the Professional of the Year award.

The awards were presented at the organization's third annual Ambassador of Hope Awards Banquet at the Vanderbilt Stadium Club in Nashville.

The Knoxville chapter of NAMI recently honored Lakeshore Superintendent Lee Thomas with its Iris Award for provider of services.

MH Planning Council Elects 2001 Officers

The Mental Health Planning Council met in May and elected the following officers for the 2000-01 year:

- President—Bob Benning, chief executive officer of the Ridgeview Psychiatric Hospital and Center, Oak Ridge.
 - Vice-president—Sita Diehl, Department of Psychiatry at Vanderbilt University, Nashville.
 - Co-secretaries—Barbara Dobbins from Knoxville and Olivia Evans with Centerstone Inc. in Tullahoma.
 - Past President—George Haley, Nashville.
- Regional Chairs for the new year include:
- Region I: Ron Harrington Sr., Johnson City
 - Region II: Sheryl McCormick, Knoxville.
 - Region III: Jerry Jenkins, Chattanooga.
 - Region IV: Susan Ficus, Nashville.
 - Region V: Olivia Evans.
 - Region VI: Rodger Jowers, Jackson.
 - Region VII: Aubrey Howard, Memphis.

Stories from BRIDGES Empower People to Take Charge of Their Lives

Back from Wherever I've Been, a collection of 70 stories from the BRIDGES Program of people who are recovering from mental illness, speaks not only to the human condition, but to the indomitable spirit that enables each to take charge and seek recovery.

BRIDGES stands for "Building Recovery of Individual Dreams and Goals through Education and Support."

Its purpose is to empower persons with psychiatric disabilities to take an active and informed role in their treatment and to recover a new sense of purpose in life.

The program is based on the philosophy that people with mental illness can recover

and lead active and full lives even while they are experiencing psychiatric symptoms.

Participants learn that there is no need to put life on hold because of depression, anxiety or even delusions and hallucinations.

Support groups are available to help and meet regularly to offer a safe and caring atmosphere in which a member can take stock of personal success and challenges.

Back from Wherever I've Been is a personal account of BRIDGES members who are willing to share their stories in the hope that they may help others.

If you would like additional information on BRIDGES or on *Back from Wherever I've Been*, call the Division of Mental Health Services - (615) 532-6717.



2001 Budget Includes MH Improvements

Housing, transportation and other community supports plus staff improvements at the regional mental health institutes all received increased funding in the FY 2001 budget.

DMHDD Commissioner Elisabeth Rukeyser said mental health services received more than \$3 million in funds targeted to providing housing for individuals who are ready to leave inpatient mental health care settings but have no place to go.

"Without an appropriate place to live in the community, seriously mentally ill people can't leave our mental health institutes or other inpatient settings. This improvement is but a small step toward meeting the housing needs of the mentally ill," she said.

The commissioner also said provisions were made to improve community resources so that people who are released from inpatient care have an optimum chance to succeed in the community.

The new budget includes almost \$2 million to improve the state's drop-in centers program; Project B.A.S.I.C., a school-based program for children; transportation costs; planned respite services; and an incarceration transition program.

"These programs are very special. They focus on providing the care and support needed so that admission to very costly and over crowded inpatient facilities is not required," Rukeyser continued.

Additional funding, more than \$3 million, is also provided to improve direct care staffing in Tennessee's regional mental health institutes.

Admissions have increased by more than 47 percent since 1997. Tennessee's institutes often have to resort to staff overlaps, overtime and expensive personnel contracts, all of which are marginally successful leaving our institutes still understaffed.

Adequate staffing is vital if the institutes are to retain accreditation and provide sufficient care to those individuals who are in the state's care. Other funding includes:

- \$2 million to meet federal requirements for medical management of mental patients who require seclusion or restraint.
- Over \$1 million to implement recommended changes in Title 33 of the *Tennessee Code Annotated*.
- Nearly 440,400 to fund a five- percent rate increase for providers of community mental health services.

The budget also includes \$200,000 to meet requirements of the Department of Justice at Memphis Mental Health Institute. This includes:

- Improving number and speed at which transcriptions are entered into the system and medical records.
- Adapt treatment-training to conform to the New York Model. Achieve better service and more flexibility in security by employing state employees. Present contracts only meet perimeter needs. State employees could allow training of security personnel to assist in patient movement and incident assistance.
- Fund increased psychiatric services within the institute to reduce need for contract visits.

It also funds an increase in Central Office personnel to meet added workload brought about by the HCBS Waiver. This addition in staff is required to ensure community agencies are paid on an accurate and timely basis.

State Gets New F&A Commissioner

In June, Dr. C. Warren Neel, former dean of the University of Tennessee College of Business, was sworn in as commissioner of the Department of Finance & Administration.

Neel replaced John Ferguson, a former bank executive from Memphis, who held the post for four years.

Commission Studies Services for Consumers of DD Services

Legislation recently adopted by the Tennessee General Assembly authorizes a commission to take a close look at community based services for persons with developmental disabilities and draft a plan to improve them.

Barbara Brent, deputy commissioner of the Division of Mental Retardation Services (DMRS), said the 18-member group is to look at current systems and programs to determine the extent they meet the needs of people who

require assistance to live in the community.

The commission will consider issues such as a review of current systems, mechanisms to build capacity to promote self-determination, cost effective services and funding sources available, the operation of waiting lists and a system to move people off those lists.

"We are very enthusiastic about this commission and its efforts to expand services and supports to people with disabilities," said Brent.

Commission membership includes two state senators, two house members, and people with developmental disabilities and their families. It also includes representatives from DMRS, Department of Finance & Administration and TennCare, service providers, and independent support coordinators.

The commission is to submit its plan to the governor by November 1 of this year. It is also authorized to continue submitting recommendations for improvements until it disbands on June 30, 2001.



Department of Mental Health and
Developmental Disabilities
Office of Public Information & Education
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Nashville, TN 37243

Individuals, Volunteer Groups Honored at Annual Luncheon



Winners of the Volunteer Spirit Award—The Christmas Spirits who volunteer at Middle TN MHI.



The Parrans Chapel Baptist Church WMU was honored as Volunteer Group of the Year. Accepting the award from the commissioner are Mary Louise Craft and Royline Pulliam.



Brenda Smith was named Volunteer of the Year and presented the award by Commissioner Rukeyser.



DMHDD Facility Volunteer Coordinators—(from left) Marsha Shield, Lakeshore, Marzee Short and Ellouise Warr, Memphis MHI; Margie Yearwood and Sandra Drennon, Middle TN MHI; Commissioner Rukeyser; Sally Moore, Middle TN MHI; Beecher Harrison Jr., Moccasin Bend MHI; Susanne Denton, Western MHI; Marti Cook, Clover Bottom DC; and Gayle Armstrong and Becky Bible, Greene Valley DC.



The Volunteer of the Year was presented to Karla Kristina "Tina" Gray by the commissioner.



Elvis impersonator Kelly Philips, with bodyguard Mike Gonce, who volunteer at Greene Valley, entertained the group.



The Commissioner's Award went to Andrew LeVan for his dedicated service to Lakeshore patients for 20 years.

A registered nurse who lives in Knoxville, a church group from Bolivar and nine employees of the Tennessee State Legislature were among 25 groups and individuals recently honored at a special luncheon at Nashville's Belle Meade Plantation.

The occasion was the DMHDD's 11th Annual Volunteer Luncheon which pays tribute to Tennesseans who contribute time, goods and services to make life better for people who receive services in state operated mental health institutes or developmental centers.

Commissioner Elisabeth Rukeyser, who prior to becoming commissioner served as a volunteer nationally and at Knoxville's Lakeshore Mental Health Institute, thanked the group and discussed the importance of volunteerism in a successful treatment and/or habilitation program.

"The people we serve have unique needs, and you are often their main contact with the community. Your understanding and special attentions are true contributors to their eventual return to the community," she said.

In addition to the awards ceremony, Kelly Phillips and a group of professional entertainers who specialize in Elvis Presley impersonations treated the honorees to a special program. Phillips and his group, regular volunteers at Greene Valley Developmental Center, live at Kingsport.

Barbara Brent, deputy commissioner for the Division of Mental Retardation Services, also addressed the group. The DMHDD's Office of Public Information & Education hosted the luncheon.

The 2000 volunteer awards were presented to:

Volunteer of the Year—Brenda Smith, Lakeshore Mental Health Institute, Knoxville

A registered nurse at the University of Tennessee Hospital, she uses her special knowledge to educate students when they visit Lakeshore. She also supports family members of persons with mental illness with advice on advocacy challenges. She provides information about mental illness and the role Lakeshore plays in the community.

Smith developed a "Crisis Resources Mini Guide" which is available to all that need it.

Her most recent contribution involved helping the Volunteer Program prepare for the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organization's official visit. She spent more than 20 hours each week assessing files and requirements to ensure they were up to date and met standards. She is a faithful member of Friends of Lakeshore (FOLI) and attends every event the origination has.

Volunteer of the Year—Karla Kristina "Tina" Gray, Greene Valley Developmental Center, Greeneville

A sophomore at Greeneville High school who

became a volunteer in March of 1998, Tina was involved in many high school activities, but wanted to do more with her life. Since that time she has given 855.2 hours or 112 workdays to Greene Valley consumers.

Tina is very faithful. Free hours after school, on weekends and holidays are usually spent reading to the residents, writing letters for them or assisting them on recreational outings. She participates in activities that make a difference to the people with whom she volunteers.

Volunteer Group of the Year—Parrans Chapel Baptist Church WMU, Bolivar

For more than 30 years, ladies from the WMU at Parrans Chapel have visited a 22-man psychosocial or long-term care unit.

They bring home-cooked food and refreshments, music, offer devotions and provide a lot of friendship. Both patients and staff welcome these visits.

For many of the residents, these volunteers serve in place of family and friends who seldom or never come. While membership in the group does change, many of the women in the WMU have been doing this for the entire 30 plus years.

Volunteer Spirit Award—The Christmas Spirits, Middle Tennessee Mental Health Institute, Nashville

This group of nine legislative employees do special things to make Christmas very merry for the people at MTMHI—they collect everything from socks to sweat shirts, candies and other food items to support the facility's holiday program. Such generous giving means that not only do the 125 persons in residence get gift bags, long term residents get birthday gifts all year round.

DMHDD Commissioner's Award—

Andrew LeVan, Lakeshore Mental Health Institute, Knoxville In 1980, LeVan began spending Saturday mornings at Lakeshore. He was a part of the Knights of Columbus group, who came each week to share what they called the Sacred Heart Friendship Hour with patients.

Although interest in this project waned for many, LeVan continued on his own. He serves coffee and doughnuts and shares his love of music and special friendships with elderly consumers.

Lakeshore has seen many changes. Superintendents, commissioners and staff have come and gone, but Andrew keeps coming. After 20 years, he remains constant to his weekly mission and says he'll be there 20 years from now.